

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Gerry Clark (Chairman), John Story (Vice-Chairman), Simon Bond, Karen Davies, Greg Jones, Neil Knowles, Helen Price, Julian Sharpe, Shamsul Shelim, Leo Walters and Simon Werner

Also in attendance: Councillor John Baldwin

Officers: Mark Beeley, Adele Taylor, Nikki Craig, Andrew Durrant, Kevin McDaniel, Emma Duncan, Vanessa Faulkner, Rebecca Hatch, Rachel Kinniburgh, Louise Freeth, Tracy Hendren, Ellen McManus-Fry, Alysse Strachan and Adrien Waite

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor L Jones. Councillor Knowles was attending the meeting as a substitute.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes from the meeting held on 12th September 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Councillor Walters commented on the situation with new home bonuses, this was an area of potential income for the council.

Adele Taylor, Executive Director of Resources, said that there had been no mention of a new homes bonus from the government and this was unlikely until at least the local government finance settlement had been confirmed. She would let Members know once she was aware.

CORPORATE PLAN 2021-26 PERFORMANCE REPORT

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the order of agenda items was changed, so that the Corporate Plan 2021-26 Performance Report was considered first.

Rachel Kinniburgh, Service Lead – Strategic Policy, Performance and Insights, outlined the report. This was the second performance report which the Panel had considered and was reflective of performance up until 30th September 2022. The report structure had been adapted following consideration of the first performance report, this included a clearer summary table of corporate plan goals. Work had been undertaken with the developer of the citizens portal to solve some technical limitations, these originally restricted the range of dates which could be showed to the user. There had also been an addition on operational focused metrics to the portal, these were designed to support the Panel's interest in the corporate plan 'a council trusted to deliver its promises' objective. Officers had also improved the narrative given on the portal.

Considering the performance of the council, Rachel Kinniburgh explained that across the three main overarching objectives, there were six goals identified as areas of concern, with eleven were showing progress.

Councillor Werner had requested to see the benchmarking against comparable local authorities as he did not feel that the LGA benchmark was useful, he asked if officers had this information.

Rebecca Hatch, Head of Strategy, said that none of the comparable local authorities had done a resident survey which contained similar questions, therefore the data did not exist.

Councillor Werner asked how many local authorities were included in the LGA benchmark.

Rebecca Hatch explained that the LGA benchmark was a national survey of around 1,000 people over a selection of local authorities, this was a national average from a national survey.

Councillor Price said that she did not know what actions were being taken on the goals which were areas of concern, she felt that this should be part of the reporting mechanism.

Rachel Kinniburgh said that the action which would be taken had been included as part of the performance narrative, officers would consider how this area could be strengthened for future reports.

Rebecca Hatch added that the report allowed Panel Members to query how areas of concern would be addressed by officers.

Councillor Price considered that if a goal was unachievable due to officer capacity, this would be useful to know soon given that the budget setting process was underway.

Adele Taylor added that a lack of resources was not always a budgetary issue, it could be difficult to secure certain resources.

Councillor Sharpe commented on the central masterplan for Windsor and Ascot high street. These were two different areas of the borough, and it was unclear whether progress made was regarding Windsor or Ascot. There was a lack of detail on what progress had actually been made.

Andrew Durrant, Executive Director of Place, admitted that from the wording in the report it was easy to confuse the two separate strands of work and the progress that had been made. Later in the report, the goal had been broken down and milestones shown which gave more detail on progress.

Councillor Shape suggested that the two strands should be separate items.

Councillor Walters noted that there was a zero tolerance goal on anti-social behaviour and the safety of women and girls in the borough, he asked if it was a zero tolerance goal for both of these areas.

Rachel Kinniburgh clarified that these were two separate goals in the corporate plan, the summary table showed that progress had been made. There were two metrics for the safety of women and girls, with data drawn from the recent residents survey. There was also new data available for the goal of reducing public concern of anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Davies made reference to the number of women and girls who felt safe in the borough and noted that the lowest figure was for those over 75 years and social renters. She knew of some areas in her ward where social housing was on poorly lit streets, Councillor Davies asked what could be done by RBWM.

Andrew Durrant confirmed that the topic would be considered at the Place Overview & Scrutiny Panel, considering street lighting, energy efficiency and concerns from young women that felt unsafe due to poor lighting.

Councillor Price commented on the Windsor Public Realm, the metric was that the project would be completed, she felt that the goal was not being measured correctly. Another example was the Windsor Vision, in the performance report it was explained that this would be considered by Cabinet. However, this paper did not appear on the Cabinet forward plan.

Andrew Durrant agreed with the comments made by Councillor Price on the Windsor Public Realm, it was hoped that there would be a final plan for the schedule of works on this project soon. Work could then start early in 2023, with the work taking around six months to complete. This could be updated on the portal to show the journey of each goal. Officers were aiming for February 2023 for a report on the Windsor Vision to be considered by Cabinet, Andrew Durrant would make sure that this was added to the Cabinet forward plan.

ACTION – Andrew Durrant to ensure that the portal was updated for the Windsor Public Realm project and that the Windsor Vision report was added to the Cabinet forward plan.

Councillor Sharpe felt that these were all projects in their own right, it would be useful for the Panel to see a project plan, which showed what was coming up. A lot of detail was added to the narrative but there were no timescales, so it was difficult for the Panel to understand what was happening with each project. Councillor Sharpe used the example of the Ascot high street project, there was no detail about the progress of this in the report. He asked why there was no Supplementary Planning Document for Ascot, there was no mention of this in any future plan.

Andrew Durrant responded by saying that of the 50 goals in the corporate plan, around half fell under the Place directorate. Working closely with the strategy team, it was important the Place team gave enough information so that the Panel could understand where the council was for each of the goals. There were areas where improvements could be made to the reporting, although it would not be possible to go into extensive detail on all goals.

Emma Duncan, Monitoring Officer and Director of Law, Governance and Public Health, said that there could be further stages added to the progress of each goal to better outline the journey. The performance report was highlighting the key priorities for the council at the current time. Panel Members could change the priorities of the corporate plan should they wish, but all goals could not be reported on each performance report.

Councillor Price had suggested at a previous meeting of the Panel, when the performance report was last considered, that the report could make reference to how the three priorities in the corporate plan were being delivered. From what she had read and heard, she was not clear how the council was performing against the three priorities.

Emma Duncan said that there was an issue in considering how things could be monitored that did not appear in the corporate plan. Programme management could be explored to see how it could added to the performance report, this was something that the strategy team were looking at.

Councillor Sharpe felt that it would be useful to know why some things were included in the performance report and why other things had not been included. For example, if the Ascot Supplementary Planning Document was not in the corporate plan, he queried why the Maidenhead Supplementary Planning Document was included as they were similar in nature.

The Chairman said that there needed to be appropriate metrics included to show the Panel where the council was in achieving the corporate plan, particularly with the plan having a timescale of five years.

Kevin McDaniel, Executive Director of People, said that goals which officers felt needed to be flagged were outlined in the performance report. If the Panel did not feel officers had flagged the goals which were a concern, they should be raised at the meeting to make officers aware.

Rebecca Hatch added that due to the significant number of goals and metrics, it could be difficult to select the right level of information to share with the Panel. Steps were being taken to strengthen programme management. On the comments made by Councillor Price, Rebecca Hatch said that connecting the priorities with the goals of the corporate plan could be reviewed for the next performance report.

Councillor Werner expressed concern that residents of Maidenhead were less satisfied than residents across the rest of the borough. He felt that the residents of Maidenhead were not being looked after by the council and this was something that needed to be addressed, although he could not see how this could be achieved through the corporate plan. Councillor Werner commented on the 17% of residents who did not want to use the internet, this was a high figure and many of the council's services were now available predominantly through the internet. Councillor Werner referenced an example of an elderly person from his ward, he wanted to report an issue with a pavement but was unable to without using the report it tool on the council's website. He asked how the council could provide its services both to those that wanted to use the internet, and those that did not.

Adele Taylor said that customer services were available over the phone and the council did provide assisted support to residents. The ability for residents to report issues easily online allowed the council to focus resource on those residents that needed additional support and were unable to use the internet. RBWM was not a digital only council.

Councillor Shelim noted that there were various hot spots and areas which were classed as high risk areas on anti-social behaviour. He asked if there was data available which showed what types of crime these areas were having issues with.

Kevin McDaniel explained that there was a Berkshire data observatory website which contained information on crimes by ward, this was a useful tool.

Councillor Sharpe added to the comments made by Councillor Werner on digital exclusion. In the south of the borough, the age was generally older and a number of residents did not use or have access to the internet. On resident satisfaction in Maidenhead, Councillor Sharpe said that there had been a significant amount of change recently in the town and as similar change was proposed in Ascot, he felt that it was important to consider how the council kept residents content with the changes which were planned.

Councillor Price commented on the targets which were set in the citizens portal. She used the example of affordable housing, in the Borough Local Plan there was a need to provide around 400 affordable homes each year. However, in the corporate plan the target was around 100 affordable homes, this had been achieved, but Councillor Price felt that there was more catch up needed in this area. Another target was for zero rough sleepers, there were currently six rough sleepers and this was regarded as a target which was on track.

Andrew Durrant explained that the Borough Local Plan exceeded the lifespan of the corporate plan and the goals which were contained within it. A housing trajectory had been drawn into the corporate plan goal, which reflected where the council needed to be during the timespan of the corporate plan. At this moment in time, RBWM was on track for both housing supply and provision of affordable housing.

ACTION – Andrew Durrant to discuss the affordable housing target further outside of the meeting with Councillor Price.

Adrien Waite, Head of Planning, continued by explaining that in the Borough Local Plan there was a stepped housing trajectory, which recognised that there were processes that needed to

be undertaken before housing delivery could start. Delivery would therefore be lower in the first few years of the plan.

Councillor Price highlighted that there was a difference between what the need was and what officers thought needed to be delivered. She asked if the goal in the corporate plan was what officers thought would be delivered, or was the goal measured against the need of the community.

Adrien Waite confirmed that officers were measuring against the goal which had been set in the corporate plan, the stepped delivery set out how the goal would be delivered

Councillor Knowles considered the 24 emergency call out for issues with waste and environment. He had reported a number of issues with things like public toilets, these did not need an emergency response but were not recorded in the data against the goal in the corporate plan. If it was, Councillor Knowles felt that this would improve credibility.

The Chairman added that safety defects were responded to, but non-safety defects were not included as part of the metric, he agreed that this should be noted by officers. The Chairman considered the recommendation in the report, that issues should be flagged by the Panel. He suggested that the draft minutes from this agenda item could be circulated to the Panel, who could then decide if there were any areas which needed to be reviewed and these could be communicated through the minutes or referred to another overview and scrutiny panel for further consideration.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to circulate a draft version of the minutes for the agenda item to the Panel.

Councillor Sharpe suggested that some items could be referred back to Cabinet, to make the appropriate changes, so that the areas of reporting which had been highlighted by the Panel could be corrected.

The Chairman said that he would discuss with officers when it would be appropriate for an update report to be considered by the Panel, on the changes which had been made.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Panel noted the report and:

- i) Agreed any areas of performance the Panel considered appropriate to refer for further, more detailed consideration.**

CORPORATE PLAN REVIEW

Rebecca Hatch outlined that the report was a refresh of the context of the corporate plan, as it had been a year since the plan was adopted. The cost of living was having a widespread impact across communities, the council and its finances and meant that budget setting would be more challenging. There had also been a lot of change and uncertainty in central government and the council was awaiting direction in a number of different areas. More data had been gathered, in particular the residents survey, and the 2021 census data which had recently been released. Officers had been delivering against the corporate plan goals and it was now clear which areas had proved to be more challenging to achieve. The residents survey showed that overall the corporate plan was still appropriate, but there were five key areas which would be updated and strengthened:

- Reflection on the cost of living increases and the work that was needed to support residents.
- Increased focus on prevention.
- Increased emphasis on reducing inequalities.
- Strengthening links with partnership working.

- Reflecting the decisions made in the budget through the corporate plan.

Councillor Bond referenced a piece of work on educational attainment which had been completed in his ward, he had been surprised by the differences in education between some areas which he knew well against the rest of the borough. Poor education and finances often led to poor health and Councillor Bond was pleased to see the council involved in partnership working with the NHS. On the equalities objectives, Councillor Bond felt that some of the objectives were more relevant than others. He liked the inclusion of socio-economic consideration to the equality impact assessments, which accompanied council reports.

Councillor Price was encouraged that there would be a greater emphasis on residents who lived in deprivation, she had a high number in her ward. On one of the outcomes, she felt that it was important to deliver both effectively and efficiently. Councillor Price said that the libraries provided an important service for residents and had been able to provide advice on legal and financial matters. However, residents now needed to pay to access this service and Councillor Price did not feel that this was right. It was important to ensure that goals in the corporate plan were not put up against the need for the council to generate revenue. On the equality impact assessments, Councillor Price also welcomed the improvements that had been made. Members needed training on what the assessments were saying so that everyone knew the implications. Members were corporate parents, Councillor Price asked if the impact of children in care could be included as part of the impact assessments.

Adele Taylor clarified that residents were not being charged to enter the library, a professional advisor had been using space at the library to provide advice to residents. As with any other individual or community group that used the library space, a small payment was required to cover costs.

Kevin McDaniel said that it was always a good idea to consider corporate parenting duties, he was unsure if the impact assessment was the right place for it on the report template but it was something worth considering.

Rebecca Hatch added that they had discussed including children in care in the impact assessments with the relevant team in Achieving for Children, where it would be relevant.

Councillor Sharpe said that as a high level report, it was very useful. He suggested that it would be interesting to see some of the detail behind the report.

Councillor Werner said that he wanted the corporate plan to put the council at the heart of the community and he felt that this was not the case, referencing the case of the individual providing services at the library which had been highlighted by Councillor Price.

The Chairman said that Councillor Werner could refer the relevant Cabinet Member to the objective in the corporate plan where the drop in service provided at the library was benefitting the community.

Councillor Shelim noted that on the survey residents had been asked both by phone and face to face. He asked how those by phone were chosen and if any particular areas of the borough were targeted for face to face interviews. On the data, the percentages did not add up to 100% on a number of areas, for example, ethnicity, working status and home ownership status.

Rebecca Hatch explained that the percentages did not always add to 100% due to the rounding of figures. Residents were recruited randomly by telephone, but statistics were tracked to try and ensure that a representative sample of the borough was gained. The face to face surveys were done to make up for the groups which had been hard to reach via phone, for example younger people.

Councillor Price noted that there was a group of residents that were not satisfied with the council, she questioned whether this group of people were less well off financially. The 'report it' tool was still not working properly and was a frustration in stopping things being done. Councillor Price commented on access to street space, she knew of residents who did not leave their homes often as they were concerned about falling over with uneven pavements and a lack of dropped curves. This was important to tackle loneliness amongst the older generations.

Rebecca Hatch confirmed that there was a correlation between being less well off financially and lower levels of satisfaction. The question of salary had not been directly asked in the survey but there were other proxies like home ownership and employment status which showed the correlation. The 18-34 age group scored low on the survey due to the cost of living crisis. The streetscape was a big topic through the Disability and Inclusion Forum, the equalities objectives had been developed with input from the Forum.

Andrew Durrant said that the council had to prioritise its resources but if there were issues with isolation, he was happy to pick this up outside the meeting and discuss the issue with the team.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the report and:

- i) Considered the changes in context.**
- ii) Provided feedback in relation to the draft equality objectives.**

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT

Nikki Craig, Head of HR, Corporate Projects and IT, said that the council was only required to publish the data on complaints in relation to adult's and children's services. However, RBWM published the data that it held across all complaints. In the 2021/22 municipal year, there had around 1,500 contacts made with the team, this was a 30% reduction on the previous year. 399 of these contacts were progressed as formal complaints, which was a similar number to the previous year. The report before the Panel considered the corporate complaints, there had been less complaints upheld this year, slightly more partially upheld and more not upheld over the previous year. Learnings had been included in the report, particularly from service areas where there had been a high number of complaints. Where a complainant was unhappy with the response received, they could take their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). This year, there had been 51 contacts with the ombudsman, with a number not progressing after initial enquires. Of the complaints to progress to a full investigation, this was a similar number to the previous year. On compliments, Nikki Craig said that there had been a slight reduction from 766 to 619. It was noted that the team with the highest level of complaints was also the team with the highest level of compliments.

Councillor Sharpe asked how RBWM compared to other local authorities.

Nikki Craig said that not all council's published the same level of data on complaints, therefore it could be difficult to benchmark. She had been able to compare the LGSCO data with the other Berkshire authorities and Nikki Craig confirmed that RBWM was at a similar level.

Councillor Knowles noted that of the complaints submitted to the ombudsman, 71% were upheld. He asked therefore whether the RBWM complaints system was following the correct guidance, when such a significant number had been overturned by the ombudsman. Councillor Knowles also commented on the 20% that were happy with the remedy that had been offered as a result of the complaint.

Nikki Craig confirmed that RBWM was trending slightly higher than other authorities for complaints which were upheld by the ombudsman. The complaints to the ombudsman were

regarding a wide variety of services and RBWM was trending slightly higher comparatively for satisfaction on the remedy to complaints made.

Kevin McDaniel added that some of the learning for officers from complaints came in changing the process as a result, this was not reflected in the statistics.

Councillor Price asked how learnings in one service area were shared with other service areas.

Nikki Craig explained that the complaints team attended service team meetings to talk through complaints. They could take the learnings from one team to another team, particularly where complaints were of a similar nature. Learnings were also shared at the Heads of Service meetings.

Councillor Price had found that it was better for residents to make a formal complaint as it led to a better outcome.

Kevin McDaniel responded that in his experience, where something had not been resolved from an initial conversation, the best way to resolve the issue was to use the complaints process, which could be quick and accurate.

Councillor Sharpe commented that it would be useful to understand what some of the most serious complaints were so that the Panel could ensure that issues had been followed through.

Nikki Craig said that a breakdown of the complaints was part of the report, with all complaints put into different theme categories. The report would also be considered by the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel in December, this could help to answer Councillor Sharpe's question.

Adele Taylor said that the most serious complaints would regard statutory services in adult's and children's services. The People Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be able to look at this in more detail.

Councillor Sharpe said that it was important for the Panel to know that corporate matters were being dealt with.

Kevin McDaniel was confident that there was a process in place, officers understood the value of following the process and getting it right. There were a small number of complaints in this area but if anything was a concern, Kevin McDaniel encouraged the Panel to flag this so that Members could be reassured.

Councillor Knowles felt that there was a lot of overlap with risk management, controls meant that serious complaints should not appear but they would be flagged up if there were any. He suggested that the risk register could be an appendix to the report which would allow the Panel to understand how risks were controlled.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the report and:

- i) That the report was published on the Council's website.**
- ii) That the annual report continued to be produced and presented at future Overview and Scrutiny Panels.**

CUSTOMER JOURNEY, COMMUNICATION AND RBWM APP

Nikki Craig outlined the briefing note, a suggestion had been made through the resident scrutiny suggestion topic process to develop an RBWM app. Over the summer, the

transformation had been restructured to three different areas, community, adult social care and digital. The digital transformation team had determined that if work continued on the website to ensure that it was fully optimised to work on mobile devices, that would give the council the same results as a separate app. It was also worth noting the small size of the team and the resources that the team had available. The work on the website was connected to the customer journey project to ensure that all of these areas were joined up.

Councillor Price said that she was aware of some residents who would not use sections of the website where a password was needed. She asked why some areas of the website, for example the RBWM Together section, needed users to have a password to allow access.

Nikki Craig explained that the RBWM Together website was a separate entity to the main RBWM website. The main reason why users needed a password for this website was so that officers could ensure that one person was giving the information and that it could be tracked back. Nikki Craig said that she was happy to provide a further written response to Councillor Price.

ACTION – Nikki Craig to provide a further written response on the RBWM Together website, if appropriate.

Councillor Price felt that users should only be around three clicks away from what they were trying to find, this was not the case currently.

Nikki Craig responded by confirming that this was the aim, for users to be able to easily access what they were looking for on the website. Drupal was a public owned asset but RBWM could learn from other authorities and share their developments.

Councillor Price said that there was some customer journey information on the website that was out of date. She asked how easy it was for officers to update the information on the website.

Nikki Craig said that there was one person on the front end of the website who was responsible for publishing, but each service had individuals who were able to check content and send pages for approval. The final person was needed to ensure accessibility compliance.

Councillor Knowles said that through his own experience, he knew how difficult it could be when documentation and data was involved. A number of websites had a mobile friendly interface which then linked into the main website if further information was required.

Nikki Craig confirmed that the website was being reviewed to ensure that it performed as expected.

Councillor Davies was pleased to see that this was a priority for the council. Considering the report it tool, she found the maps to be a particular issue as it was based on roads and users were unable to report an issue in a park, for example, using the map tool.

Nikki Craig said that the report tool was developed in house to allow potholes to be reported to the council, which was why the map tool was fixed to the highway.

Councillor Davies said that a number of residents were positive about the 'fix my street' scheme, she asked if it also worked well on the receiving end from officers.

Andrew Durrant said that there were a number of different links and connections to operators and contractors, the team were working to improve the tool which would help officers locate problems.

Councillor Sharpe said that the security risk needed to be considered, including the potential for data leaks and ensuring that only the right people received personal information. Ease of use was important in ensuring that the customer journey was successful.

The Chairman said that the customer journey for the vast majority of residents was fairly small. The open information on the website could be more user friendly, the way that residents interacted with online services was important.

Councillor Sharpe said that the government website had customer journeys for things like car tax which were fairly simple, this was what RBWM should aim for.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the report.

As the time had reached 9.30pm, the Panel needed to hold a vote on whether to continue the meeting.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel voted to continue the meeting.

WORK PROGRAMME

Mark Beeley, Democratic Services Officer, highlighted the scoping document on the equalities project which had been added to the work programme by Councillor Price. The Panel were happy with the proposals set out in the scoping document.

Mark Beeley also suggested that it would be useful for some Panel Members to assist in the drafting of the scoping document for the referral of air pollution performance to be considered by the People Overview & Scrutiny Panel. Councillor Davies and Councillor Sharpe confirmed that they would be happy to help with this outside of the meeting.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

PART II MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part II minutes of the meeting held on 12th September 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 9.40 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....